

Article - Education

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§11–209.

(a) In this section, “near completer” means an individual who has completed some college credits but does not have a college degree and is no longer attending an institution of higher education.

(b) (1) (i) The Commission, in collaboration with institutions of higher education, shall create a statewide communication campaign to identify near completers in the State and to encourage near completers to re-enroll in an institution of higher education to earn a degree.

(ii) For each of fiscal years 2020 through 2024, the Governor shall include in the State budget \$125,000 to the Commission to fund a statewide communication campaign.

(2) The communication campaign shall:

(i) Make use of a variety of marketing media, including billboards, brochures, and electronic resources;

(ii) Provide a centralized contact point for near completers to get information about and assistance with re-enrolling;

(iii) Make readily available contact information for each public institution of higher education in the State; and

(iv) Focus on near completers who:

1. Earned a minimum grade point average of 2.0 on a scale of 4.0 while in college; and

2. A. Earned at least 45 credit hours if the individual attended a community college; or

B. Earned at least 90 credit hours if the individual attended a senior higher education institution.

(c) (1) The Commission shall develop and implement a centralized web-based match program for near completers that facilitates the matching of a near

completer with any institution of higher education at which the near completer would be able to complete the degree.

(2) The Commission shall encourage each institution of higher education in the State to participate in the match program at no cost to the institution.

(3) (i) An institution that participates in the match program shall provide the Commission with information regarding near completers who attended the institution, as requested by the Commission and in the format identified by the Commission.

(ii) On receipt of information under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph, the Commission shall:

1. Determine any matches between a near completer and institutions; and

2. Send information to the near completer regarding the matches, any incentives offered for near completers by the State or by the institutions, and any other financial aid available to the near completer.

(4) For each of fiscal years 2020 through 2024, the Governor shall include in the State budget \$50,000 to the Commission to develop and implement the match program for near completers described under this subsection.

(d) (1) A near completer is eligible for a grant under this section if the near completer:

(i) Earned a minimum grade point average of 2.0 on a scale of 4.0 while in college; and

(ii) 1. Earned at least 45 credit hours if the individual attended a community college; or

2. Earned at least 90 credit hours if the individual attended a senior higher education institution.

(2) The Governor shall include in the State budget the amount specified in paragraph (3) of this subsection to the Commission to provide to a near completer the following amount:

(i) For a near completer who re-enrolls in a community college, up to one-third of the in-county tuition charge; or

(ii) For a near completer who re-enrolls in a public senior higher education institution, up to one-third of the resident undergraduate tuition charge.

(3) The Governor shall include the following amounts in the State budget to the Commission for near completer grants under paragraph (2) of this subsection:

(i) For fiscal year 2020, \$250,000; and

(ii) For each of fiscal years 2021 through 2024, \$375,000.

(4) A grant provided under this subsection may be used only for tuition and may not be used for fees or other charges or expenses related to attending an institution of higher education.

(5) All nonloan aid received by the near completer shall be credited to the near completer's tuition before the calculation of the grant amount provided under this subsection.

(6) Grants shall be provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

(e) The Commission and institutions of higher education may implement other near completer initiatives in addition to the campaign and match program required under this section.

(f) By December 1, 2019, and every December 1 through 2025, the Commission shall submit a report, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, to the General Assembly on the details of the statewide communication campaign and the match program, including implementation of the campaign and match program and a detailed account of the expenditures under the grant program established in subsection (d) of this section.

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